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**Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) and the
New Combatant Commander - AFRICOM**

by

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Captain, USN

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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6 November 2007

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Abstract

NEO: Preparation for a New Geographic Combatant Command

Doctrine for Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) was promulgated based on our Unified Command Plan (UCP) that designated five Geographical Combatant Commands (GCCs) supported with traditional Component Command capabilities. The UCP change incorporating Africa Command (AFRICOM) created a GCC that departs from the traditional model, yet it encompasses an Area of Responsibility (AOR) that is perhaps the most economically challenged and one of the most diplomatically and militarily volatile. Since NEO in AFRICOM's AOR is not a question of "if," but of "when and where," preparation now by the GCC will improve planning during the crisis mode when Joint Force Commanders face the significant challenges of these complex and critical operations.

INTRODUCTION

Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (NEOs) are crisis triggered events that combine challenges involving a complex combination of operational factors and trigger ramifications that can extend well beyond the area of the immediate conflict. An exercise after action report (AAR) accurately portrays them with the statement: “NEOs are never easy or straightforward. They are conducted under highly charged, dangerous conditions, often driven by tightly compressed timelines and beset by less than perfect intelligence on volatile local conditions.”¹

That interagency exercise, Tiger Response (U) was conducted in the summer of 2000, shortly after promulgation of the first Joint Doctrine specifically addressing NEO, Joint Publication 3-07.5.² A second iteration, Joint Publication 3-68 was signed out on 22 January 2007. Among numerous changes, this revised doctrine updated the term for NEO to include consequence management of natural disasters, employment of forward-deployed assets, and updated the responsibility of the Combatant Commanders (CCDRs) for their execution.

Two weeks after Joint Publication 3-68 was signed, the President announced a significant change to the Unified Command Plan (UCP) which created Africa Command (AFRICOM) as a new, separate Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC).³ AFRICOM officially stood up this past 1 October 2007 and is scheduled to be Fully Operationally Capable (FOC) on 1 October 2008

With so many time-critical demands on this new GCC, is NEO really an operation that AFRICOM should devote limited manpower and time on now? This paper strives to answer with a very clear “yes.” That determination directs us to the more complicated question, “What can AFRICOM do now to set the stage for success for a Joint Task Force

Commander who will actually execute the NEO when it is likely to be assigned?” Given the NEO description in the Tiger Response AAR, one should conclude that any GCC deliberate planning now will mitigate some of the danger and improve the time line and the JTF’s position at the outset of a volatile situation. It is clearly understood that deliberate prior planning can mitigate costly lessons encountered in reaction to a crisis.

This paper will highlight the operational factors in the theater, and illustrate how they shape options for the future NEOs assigned to AFRICOM. An analysis of current information will underscore why DOD will be tasked to evacuate American citizens again in the AFRICOM AOR. That will be followed by an overview of key points of NEO doctrine juxtaposed with current GCC and Component preparations for those operations. A contrast of the proposed AFRICOM composition and posture with that of the traditional GCCs’ will clarify AFRICOM’s space-time-force challenge at the outset of its inevitable NEO(s).

This paper will propose recommendations for AFRICOM to conduct deliberate NEO planning and war gaming that will reduce portions of the eventually-assigned JFC’s required planning time and actual time for movement of personnel in the NEO execution.

One up-front caveat for this paper is that my proposals will be limited to permissive NEOs. My analysis will reference non-permissive operations, but the necessary discussion of forces for non-permissive NEOs is beyond the scope of this Joint Military Operational Art research paper.

BACKGROUND

One of the best places to begin a discussion on or an analysis of any military operation is in joint doctrine, which defines NEO as:

Noncombatant evacuation operations (NEOs) are conducted to assist the Department of State (DOS) in evacuating US citizens, Department of Defense (DOD) civilian personnel, and designated host nation (HN) and third country nationals whose lives are in danger from locations in a foreign nation to an appropriate safe haven. Although normally considered in connection with hostile action, evacuation may also be conducted in anticipation of, or in response to, any natural or man-made disaster.⁴

Given that NEOs are usually triggered by international crises that place American Citizens overseas in peril, they create drama that brings intense media attention and public focus even if only for a short time. Though individuals not directly involved with particular NEOs are rarely able to recall an operational name, many people can identify issues surrounding the operation long after its completion.

As an example, Operation URGENT FURY may not be a name recognized by most Americans, many do recall firefights throughout the islands of Granada in October 1983. They remember the relief of the American citizen evacuees, their families, and the nation as a whole upon their repatriation. Many will also recall that criticism of the operation continued both in the media and throughout the Congress long after the participating units were engaged in other activities elsewhere throughout the world.

General John Vessey, who was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time, was interviewed on “Meet the Press” in November of 1983. He stated that, “We planned the operation in a very short period of time – about 48 hours. We planned it with insufficient intelligence for the type of operation we wanted to conduct.”⁵ Note that the uncanny similarities between General Vessey’s interview about URGENT FURY and the AAR from Tiger Response almost 20 years later.

Fallout from criticisms of Operation URGENT FURY is widely considered one of the final issues leading to one of the largest reorganizations of the entire U.S. military, under the direction of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986.

The most recent U.S. NEO was July 2006 when almost fifteen thousand Americans were safely evacuated from Lebanon to intermediate havens in Cyprus and Turkey. Although the evacuation was successful, there was a swelling media and public aggravation over the fact that large numbers of Americans were not evacuated from Beirut until a week after the fighting erupted between Israel and Hezbollah. The AAR from the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned highlighted the fact that the initial estimate of five thousand evacuees rapidly swelled to the fourteen-thousand plus. The Commander of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) that conducted the NEO explained that, “These things come up so quickly and so fast that you don’t have time to practice.”⁶

An important point to understand is that evacuation of U.S. personnel from embassies and their surrounding areas are not uncommon. A recent Government Accounting Office (GAO) report stated that the Department of State (DOS) has conducted more than 80 evacuations over the past 5 years and few rose to the level of a NEO which requires DOD interaction.⁷

The point when a DOS evacuation escalates to a joint, interagency NEO is always a crisis and it is still clear that neither planners nor executers will have sufficient opportunity to thoroughly plan. U.S. embassies in Africa, and therefore AFRICOM, will have to execute NEOs in the coming years, so it is critical that AFRICOM prepares as much as possible now.

MISSION INITIATION & MISSION ANALYSIS

As with any military operation, the first step, “Planning Initiation” occurs when “an appropriate authority recognizes a potential for military capability to be employed.”⁸

For a NEO, that would occur when the Department of State executes the Memorandum of Agreement with the DOD and requests assistance. Either the President or the Secretary of Defense will order the NEO through the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁹

The primary consideration in the second step of the Joint Operational Planning Procedure, “Mission Analysis” is to determine the national strategic end state, and to identify the specific military objectives required to support that end state.¹⁰ Unlike the more open-ended contingency operations, a NEO generally has a more clearly defined objective. Unless other mission requirements are added, “the military end state for a NEO is the safe evacuation of all Noncombatants to designated safe havens and the withdrawal of the [multinational] forces.”¹¹

In order to successfully achieve any stated military objectives, planners focus initially on the operational factors of the space, time, and force. Planners, staffs, and decision-makers analyze how an organization – often a Joint Task Force (JTF) - will be limited by these factors, and what decisions the Joint Force Commander (JFC) has to make to reach the desired end state.

Space: A highlight of some important points about the AFRICOM’s operational space will amplify why there will be NEOs in that AOR, and what operational limitations a JTF will have to contend with in their planning and execution.

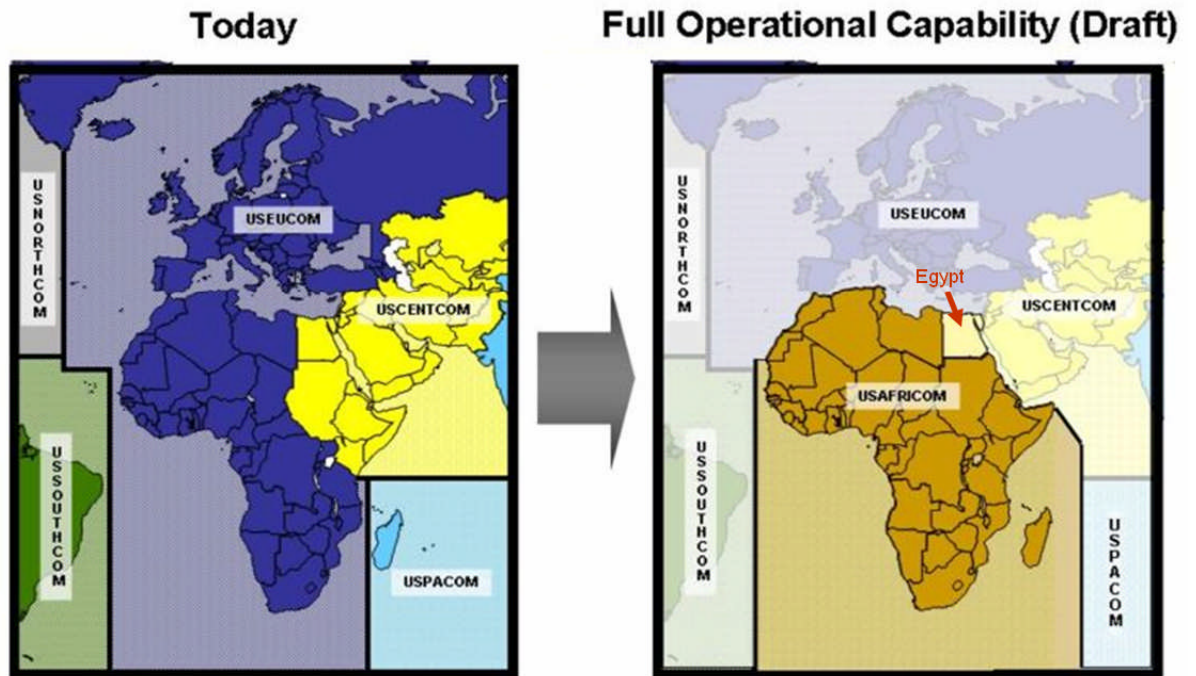


Figure 1 AFRICOM AOR (Reprinted from JCS Public Brief on AFRICOM)

AFRICOM's AOR encompasses 53 countries, covering just over one fifth of the world's land mass, with over fifteen percent of the world's fastest growing population living there.¹² Though it is commonly understood that much of the continent has suffered from chronic poverty and instability, but few realize that well over half of Africa's countries have been classified among the weakest states in the world according to the most recent report compiled by The Fund for Peace and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "The Failed States Index 2007" had 22 African states listed in the 40 most unstable countries, and eight African states were in the top ten, with Sudan at the top.¹³

Though not all the news in the Index is bad for AFRICOM, unfortunately, three of the four countries leading the Index trend downward were Somalia, Equatorial Guinea, and Niger.¹⁴

Unstable countries, often clustered in volatile regions of AFRICOM's AOR are going to be, for the foreseeable future, areas where the U.S. is going to have to respond to crises by evacuating its citizens in a NEO. Though NEO may not have been a topic of consideration, the U.S. leadership recognized the significance of the "failed state" as early as 2002 when the National Security Strategy recognized that "America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones."¹⁵ We also have a history of NEOs in the AOR, with U.S. military conducting fifteen NEOs from African nations.¹⁶

Continuing with the analysis of AFRICOM's space, planners on the GCC and the JTF staffs must plan to transport evacuees from the country-in-crisis to a safe haven. The choice between air, land, or sea, will more often be determined by operational limitations than by the JFC's preferences.

The limitation throughout vast areas of Africa, especially in the most unstable areas is infrastructure. Land routes will rarely be an option because few roads are adequate for rapid, large movements of personnel from a crisis to a suitable safe haven for further transport. Though there are highways between some major cities within a number of the countries, they are seldom completed between capitals or major cities between different countries. As an Action Officer on a SIXTH FLEET task force, I and my fellow-planners encountered logistical operational limitations on numerous occasions resulting from the underdeveloped infrastructure throughout much of Africa. Other government agencies and commercial organizations we worked with contended with the same issues.

Air transport has been the primary evacuation mode for a number of NEOs in Africa and other locations around the world, but neither the GCC nor the JFC should default to that without closely evaluating space-force limitations (to be discussed later in this paper) or

other unpredictable, possible ‘show-stopper’ limitations such as lack of suitable aviation fuel. A recent example is a Sixth Fleet delegation on a Theater Security Cooperation trip in the Gulf of Guinea was delayed for over a day, along with all other commercial aircraft in Ghana’s capital, Accra last summer.

It is readily apparent, however, that airlift would be the only option for some of the central, land-locked regions of the continent. Airlift was the only means possible in the 1996 NEO from Rwanda, and was the chosen transportation from Liberia in 1992.¹⁷

The third transportation option of maritime lift may also have infrastructure complications as well. A number of the ports, even those in major coastal and some capital cities have deteriorated piers and port facilities. It is not uncommon to have sunken vessels posing hazards to navigation in the approaching waterways to leading port facilities for some of these nations.

Operational challenges imposed by the African infrastructure are made more acute by the vast distances involved. U.S. military planners often refer to it as “the tyranny of distance,” with the Sahara Desert itself being roughly the size of the continental United States.

This tyranny of distance works against a NEO both on the front and the back end of the operation. The front end requires any U.S. forces not forward-deployed in the immediate vicinity to travel longer distances just to position to begin the evacuation. The evacuees then have to be taken to an intermediate staging base (ISB), which may not be a neighboring country. The instability-turned-crisis that necessitated a NEO in one country may very well be wide-spread enough to preclude an ISB in close proximity. That in turn extends the lines of transport from the evacuation site to the nearest safe haven.

An important point to consider is that, unlike the AORs for the other GCCs the U.S. has no Main Operating Bases (MOB) or Forward Operating Sites (FOS) other than the recently built-up facilities on the east coast for JTF Horn of Africa. This point segues to the next operational factor.

Force: Force has to be considered by AFRICOM now in order to be prepared for eventual African NEOs. With the vast array of operational requirements that the U.S. military must train towards, NEO is a scenario that only one organization specifically trains to and attains certification for.

Each Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), or MEU(SOC) trains and deploys as an integrated unit within an amphibious Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) with NEO as one of the operations they are certified to conduct. Though a particular MEU cannot presuppose and train for every potential NEO scenario encompassing all of the unstable countries they will operate near, they do train for a baseline capability and conduct predeployment NEO exercises. Their training plan includes as many as three or four NEOs which integrate State Department officials and occasionally even include ambassadors.¹⁸ My survey of the African NEOs conducted over the past 15 years revealed that MEU(SOC) participation has been critical to the success of almost every one.

A key force consideration for AFRICOM is that traditional GCC forces are not forecast to be regularly forward-deployed in the AOR. This paper is not about advocating force structures and allocations, but it has to be recognized that AFRICOM's current posture is not likely to field direct assignment of subordinate Component Commands with traditional forces deployed in the AOR (including MEU[SOC]) that the other GCCs have. This results from AFRICOM's non-traditional and non-kinetic primary focus, which is not centered on

traditional forces and hardware. That will require AFRICOM planners to be proactive in effective, non-traditional preparation for the eventual NEOs.

One counterargument to this paper's thesis could be an assertion that Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) is in a very similar situation to AFRICOM in their relative abilities to respond rapidly to a NEO. A quick survey of "The Failed States Index 2007" highlights a significant difference in the relative regional stability. Where the African continent had eight of the top ten and 22 of the 40 most unstable nations on the index, SOUTHCOM has two in the top 40, with Haiti ranked at 11 and Columbia at 33.¹⁹

Additionally, when considering SOUTHCOM's factor of space, there are numerous U.S. operating bases in reasonably close proximity to those two locations of potential crisis. When considering the factor of force, there are two points for clarification. Although JTF Horn of Africa (JTF-HOA) has forces and a growing operating base in Djibouti, those forces are predominantly civil affairs and personnel force protection, without the material capacity to conduct NEO. Djibouti is in the immediate region of some of the states at risk, but much farther from most of them to be effective.

Time: Joint Doctrine for NEOs recognizes that timing for the actual call for the evacuation is likely to be less than optimal. All authoritative documents on NEOs clearly state that the U.S. Ambassador is the President's direct representative and the senior U.S. Government authority. As such, "The decision to evacuate a U.S. embassy and the order to execute a NEO is political. The order...may be delayed until the last possible moment to avoid actions that may be viewed as tacit admission of political failure [of the host nation government]."²⁰

The 2006 Lebanon NEO was a clear example of this. Although almost fifteen thousand American citizens were evacuated (as were citizens of many of the other nations by their respective national authorities), the American Ambassador and much of his staff remained at the embassy in Beirut. Though he evacuated Americans from Lebanon, he kept the American Embassy manned and operating in order to display confidence in the legitimate Lebanese Government amidst external attack from Israel and fighting by the surprisingly well organized and equipped Hezbollah from within the country. There were serious, complicated risks if the Ambassador had to evacuate the embassy at the last minute, but the political imperative to remain and support Lebanon was an overriding factor.

Combining lessons learned with the broad summary of operational factors in the AFRICOM AOR, a generic initial mission analysis for our AFRICOM-assigned JTF could read something like: A crisis-triggered event; a politically necessitated delay in the decision to evacuate; a lack of forward operating site; minimal U.S. forces in the vicinity; poor infrastructure in the location (country, city, area) of the crisis; and long distances for positioning forces once identified and assigned. That would match the Tiger Response AAR fairly closely.

Integral to that assessment would be the characterization of the operational environment for the NEO. The least complicated, lowest impact would be a “Permissive Environment,” which would not require combat forces to support the evacuation. The other end of the spectrum would be a “Hostile Environment” that could be defined by localized civil disorder, regional factionalism, or hostile enemy action. This would require insertion of a combat or security forces that would necessarily range in size and complexity with the

number of evacuees. An “Uncertain Environment” is defined between those, which may require insertion of security personnel, or where there is concern of escalation.²¹

COURSE of ACTION DEVELOPMENT & COMPARISON

With a clear understanding of mission tasking and military end state, and an analysis of the operational factors and limitations, the next step in the planning process is Course of Action (COA) Development and Comparison.

Part of that process incorporates counterarguments, which segues into addressing counterarguments to thesis of this paper. One could propose that much of this planning has already been initiated for NEOs in several venues; that COAs effectively exist in American embassy Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) that are reviewed by the respective GCC for their locations.²² One might state that if the crisis triggering a particular evacuation corresponds with those preset, reviewed and vetted plans, then the GCC and JTF would merely be required to execute with the assets on hand that would match the plan.

Crises rarely, however, match any plans. The most recent NEO in Lebanon in 2006 and a (near-NEO) crisis in Guinea six months later highlighted critical seams between plans and capabilities and the actual crisis-driven events. The current planning seams are an over-reliance on utilizing air transport – whether commercial, military, or a combination, and a false confidence that the Navy-Marine Expeditionary Strike Group with MEU(SOC) will be a readily available alternative.

Although Lebanon is in the Central Command’s (CENTCOM) AOR vice AFRICOM’s, there are several critically important lessons on operational factors to be drawn

from this recent, no-notice crisis for the new GCC. The first is on factor-space and a follow-on combination of force-time.

With three major international airports in Lebanon, what appeared to be a reasonable Embassy EAP of airlifting evacuees was negated at the outset when the Israelis bombed all three airport runways at the outset of hostilities on 13 July.²³ That development created an operational limitation that rendered any fixed-wing commercial or military airlift useless, even in the permissive NEO environment. The space U.S. planners were working with changed before the NEO could be initiated.

The second factor is force-time, which was the time it took for the alternative NEO forces to transit into position for the operation. The 24th MEU(SOC) as part of the IWO JIMA Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) and the 352nd Special Operations Group (SOG) conducted the NEO. However, the four helicopters from the 352nd SOG were twenty four hours transit from Beirut, and the ESG was off the coast of Jordan which was several days transit from the Lebanese coast.²⁴

One of the most important “takeaways” for AFRICOM should be that the force-multiplier used so effectively for the Lebanon NEO was commercially contracted transport vessels. The Functional Combatant Command, U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) contracted a commercial cruise ship, the Orient Queen through its Maritime Component, Military Sealift Command (MSC). The Orient Queen, which was already in the area, evacuated one thousand people on 19 July, a day before the first U.S. Navy ship arrived in Beirut.²⁵

With July’s NEO from Lebanon in mind, consider a following crisis in Guinea that very nearly precipitated a NEO in January 2007 when Guinea was being wracked by

increasingly larger and more violent demonstrations of students and workers and unions, protesting over numerous grievances with the corrupt and ineffective government. The U.S. Government was correspondingly growing more concerned about the safety of the estimated seven to ten thousand Americans in the country. Guinea is number nine on “The Failed States Index 2007,” which puts it in the “Critical” category.²⁶

A quick analysis of the operational factors reveals some of the same operational limitations as Lebanon with some disquieting additional complications for AFRICOM. For factor-space, there is only one airport in the capital of Conakry, and it is located very near the area where some of the greatest civil disturbances and local disruption were occurring. If the civil disorder erupted and spread into chaos, it would likely have necessitated an evacuation of American citizens. Given the proximity to the one viable airport, it is likely also that the ensuing civil disarray would have prevented air transport for evacuees as in Lebanon previously. That would have necessitated military support and a NEO.

For factor-force, there was no Expeditionary Strike Group with a MEU(SOC) in the region nor in the AOR.²⁷ There were several U.S. combatant ships in the region at the time, but their capacity to conduct a large-scale NEO would have been quickly overwhelmed. It has always been recognized that “Even the smallest-scale NEO can tax the resources of a CRUDES [cruiser or destroyer class] ship to the breaking point.”²⁸

The factor force-time to position an ESG and MEU(SOC) would have been double that of the week it took to position the IWO JIMA ESG near Lebanon – once an ESG could be identified and tasked.

Recognizing the force-multiplier gained with commercial contracted vessels earlier in Lebanon, European Command (EUCOM, the GCC for Guinea at the time) made preliminary

inquiries about the availability of Military Sealift Command (MSC) or commercial assets in the area. The majority of MSC ships are large cargo transport vessels with limited passenger capability. Our planning cell verified that the one MSC ship in nearby Cape Verde at the time was too large to pull into the port at Conakry. Reference the overview of the operational factor of space for AFRICOM earlier in this paper, and you will recognize the operational limitation of limited infrastructure, including ports.

As for availability of commercial vessels to contract, there was very limited information. The crisis abated before any suitable vessels were identified. In addition to drastically different infrastructure, a significant difference between a NEO in the Mediterranean and one almost anywhere else in Africa is the ready availability of passenger transport vessels. A critical point here is that the U.S. planners and commercial agents currently have very limited information on what commercial assets exist and what contract vessel possibilities there are in the Gulf of Guinea region.

Joint doctrine for NEO briefly refers to use of commercial maritime assets, specifically in Annex D. The problem is that doctrine allocates that planning to the JTF staff and commander. If the JTF is the first organization to research detailed information on any available commercial sealift transportation for an African NEO, it is too late. Remember the AARs and the lessons-learned and the various characterizations of NEOs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If we clearly understand the operational factors that AFRICOM will face in a NEO, we know there will be no opportunity to change the space, and events in the crisis itself may

further limit our space as demonstrated in Lebanon. We know that U.S. forces will be limited, and there won't be time, given the tyranny of distance to appreciably change them in response to an unforeseen crisis. One factor we can improve prior to the crisis is our time. U.S. planners can minimize operational limitations now by conducting some of the critical detailed planning regionally that can bring commercial assets to bear locally.

Commercial shipping contracts are researched with market surveys, prepared and signed by MSC on behalf of TRANSCOM where cost-effective. Understanding that ESG and MEU(SOC) presence is highly unlikely to coincide with the next AFRICOM NEO, detailed regional market surveys must be conducted now as a force-shaping measure for the JTF that will be tasked in the future.²⁹

A key aspect of COA analysis is wargaming, when strengths and weaknesses of capabilities and plans are evaluated against opposing factors ranging from environmental elements to enemy actions. Opposing factors for a permissive NEO could be entirely environmental; degraded infrastructure, or uncontrolled civil unrest that has disrupted normal transportation and communications facilities. Early research for this paper revealed that a localized NEO has never been the central point of a wargame at the Naval War College. NEOs are often a factor in an operation or a campaign, but they are discussed as a possible requirement or noted as an action completed.³⁰ War games can illuminate issues now that AFRICOM planners and JTF staffs would likely encounter in a number of rapidly developing localized and regional crises that could require a NEO. A point of focus should be simultaneous crises in both EUCOM and AFRICOM, given that the Component Commands with the personnel and equipment will likely be simultaneously supporting both GCCs.

Since AFRICOM's focus as a GCC is a departure from the traditional force-projection model to one centered on Theater Security Cooperation (TSC), much of the deliberate planning will likely shift from major campaigns to more localized events. One of the priorities of the staff should be NEOs. Though the actual event that will trigger the next NEO in AFRICOM may not be readily predicted, "The Failed States Index" presents a detailed list of the most likely areas of crisis as a sound starting point. This, along with other staff-generated details, will provide sufficient information for wargaming crisis scenarios in the AOR. Research and wargaming now will reveal likely operational limitations and provide insights into effective mitigation.

Another valuable AFRICOM initiative would be to man a standing JTF for Consequence Management, which would be the focal point and do the advanced planning for NEO in Africa. Standing JTFs have been effective doctrinal organizations within DOD for a number of years, and this JTF could be a key AFRICOM component to set the stage for success in the inevitable highly charged, short-fused, dangerous operation in volatile conditions.

Another advantage for the standing JTF-NEO would be its ability to bridge some of the gaps between DOS and DOD that hamper NEOs. Both the GAO and the Marine Corps Lessons Learned reports cited difficulties between the two departments. JTF-NEO would be able to capitalize on one of the structural distinctions between AFRICOM and the other GCCs, which is the designation of two Deputy Commanders: one for civilian affairs and one for military requirements. A proactive standing JTF should be uniquely positioned to capitalize on that State-Defense intersection, and position the actual operators in a NEO ahead of the problems associated with the interagency seams.

A final JTF-NEO advantage would be its position as a clearinghouse of crisis indicators. Its continual analysis could in itself provide a dynamic list of African states and their status relative to crisis, and thus to AFRICOM crisis response options, including NEO. This list could very well translate as an effective measure of effectiveness for theater and regional cooperation programs.

In summary, AFRICOM is a challenging re-focus of the U.S. on a continent with failed states clustered in regions of serious instability. Unpredictable, volatile disruptions of civil order in these states will necessitate evacuation of American citizens from crisis areas with continued regularity. The magnitude of some of these evacuations will require DOD to assist DOS with NEOs.

SUMMARY

Though no planning can predict all of the crises that could trigger a NEO, AFRICOM should utilize the wargaming capabilities of the various DOD institutions in order to identify operational weaknesses and limitations and to more effectively mitigate them.

With the clear recognition that no transportation option has been optimal for all previous NEOs, it is understood that planners will have to consider and develop a depth of options for future operations. They must, however, learn from recent experience that reliance on traditional, forward-deployed military forces will significantly increase time-lines in an AOR constrained by the tyranny of distance. Short-notice, contracted commercial passenger transport was an extremely effective force-multiplier in the recent Lebanon NEO, and must be explored in AFRICOM's AOR. AFRICOM planners have to work with TRANSCOM

and its components to research and retain those options now in order to minimize the time delay for the assigned JTF later.

An important focal point for that planning would be an AFRICOM JTF-Consequence Management (NEO) to coordinate the planning efforts and bridge the gaps between DOS and DOD, as well as those between the GCC's Component Commands. Though AFRICOM has a myriad of challenges and staff requirements already, it should devote staff effort now to be adequately prepared for highly-likely, short-fused, crisis-driven NEOs.

This paper has focused on the challenges facing Africa and AFRICOM, and has provided several recommendations for consideration. One additional point of consideration is that the very unconventional structure proposed for AFRICOM could be one of the most important assets for addressing the complications inherent in a NEO. Having reviewed AARs and other post-operation documentation on numerous NEOs, one of the most common problems occur at the DOS-DOD interface. AFRICOM has been planned as an interagency organization, with a senior executive DOS representative as one of the GCC deputies. AFRICOM is interagency, which should provide the impetus for innovative interagency solutions to volatile, complex crises.

NOTES

¹ Office of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Affairs, *NEO Strategic Decision Making Exercise (U) TIGER RESPONSE (U) After Action Report (U)* (12 September 2000), Preface. (Secret) Information extracted is unclassified.

² All of the War College papers that discussed NEO were from the late 1980s or early 1990s, well prior to JP-3-07.5. Their main theses were almost always the urgent need for a Joint Doctrine for NEO.

³ Lauren Ploch, *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007), 1.

⁴ Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Noncombatant Evacuation Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-68 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 22 January 2007), I-1.

⁵ Ronald H. Cole, *Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and execution of Joint Operations in Grenada, 12 October-2 November 1983* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 64.

⁶ U.S. Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned, “Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) Lessons and Observations from the NEO of the American Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon, conducted by 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations capable) 15 July-20 August 2006,” USMC CLL, 22, https://www.mccll.usmc.mil/document_repository/IORs/Non%20combatant%20Evacuation%20Operations%20v7_2.pdf (accessed 20 October 2007).

⁷ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *State Department: The July 2006 Evacuation of American Citizens from Lebanon* (Washington, DC: GAO, 2007), 3.

⁸ Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning*, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 26 December 2006), III-19.

⁹ Joint Publication (JP) 3-68., III-5.

¹⁰ Ibid., III-21.

¹¹ Joint Publication (JP) 3-68., II-2.

¹² United States Africa Command, “U.S. Africa Command Reaches Initial Operating Capability,” <http://www.africom.mil> (accessed 20 October 2007).

¹³ “The Failed States Index 2007,” *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2007, 57.

¹⁴ Ibid., 59. Additional information in that source: Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were among the most improved nations and have “pulled back from the brink of failure.”

¹⁵ Ploch, *Africa Command: Strategic Interests U.S. Military in Africa*, CRS5.

¹⁶ Ibid, 27-29.

¹⁷ GlobalSecurity.org, “1992 USAFE NEO,” http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/liberia_neo.htm (accessed 4 November 2007).

¹⁸ U.S. Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned, *Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations*, 3, https://www.mccell.usmc.mil/document_repository/IORs/Non%20combatant%20Evacuation%20Operations%20v7_2.pdf (accessed 20 October 2007).

¹⁹ The Failed States Index 2007, *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2007, 57.

²⁰ Joint Publication (JP) 3-68., I-2.

²¹ Ibid., I-3.

²² JP 3-68 “The GCCs are tasked to maintain contingency plans for the support of DOS should such assistance be ordered by SecDef. These plans include support for the evacuation for noncombatants.” Executive Order 12656, “Assignment of Emergency Preparedness Responsibilities,” November 18, 1988. State-Defense Statement on Protection and Evacuation of U.S. Citizens and Certain Designated Aliens Abroad,” July 8, 1980.

²³ U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *U.S. Evacuation from Lebanon*, 7.

²⁴ U.S. Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned, *Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations*, 6, https://www.mccell.usmc.mil/document_repository/IORs/Non%20combatant%20Evacuation%20Operations%20v7_2.pdf (accessed 20 October 2007).

²⁵ U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *U.S. Evacuation from Lebanon*, 6.

²⁶ The Failed States Index 2007, *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2007, 57.

²⁷ In contrast, both the Pacific Command and Central Command GCCs have at least one ESG with a MEU(SOC) operating in the respective theaters at any given time.

²⁸ U.S. Navy Surface Warfare Development Group, *Maritime Conduct of Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (NEO)*, (Norfolk, VA: COMSURFWARDEVGRU, 30 May 1993), C-1.

²⁹ Though the 2003 Liberia NEO was successfully conducted by a MEU(SOC), it was a case of fortunate timing that the crisis occurred as it transited the Atlantic embarked on the IWO JIMA ARG while enroute to a CENTCOM deployment. Neither EUCOM nor AFRICOM currently have ARG/MEU(SOC) deployments scheduled. They will have short exercise presence or transit presence only.

³⁰ CDR Dave Sampson (Deputy Director, Naval War College Wargaming Department, Newport, RI), in discussion with the author.

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